DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 115 688 TM 004 962

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TITLE Starkweather Social Relations Test for Preschool Children.
SPONS AGENCY Oklahoma State Univ., Stillwater. Research Foundation.
PUB DATE Jun 71
NOTE 6p.; For related documents, see TM 004 961 and 963

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Peer Relationship; *Photographs; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Preschool Tests; *Social Relations
IDENTIFIERS *Starkweather Social Relations Test (Preschool)

ABSTRACT

The Starkweather Social Relations Test is designed to measure a young child's social value within his own peer group. It is more than a test of popularity. It combines a picture interview technique with gift-giving, and each child's value in his group is measured in terms of the extent to which his gift-giving is reciprocated by the children whom he chooses. The assumption underlying the choice of gift-giving as a technique for measuring social relations is that an individual wants to benefit someone he likes. Materials needed include a composite picture of children in the group, inexpensive toys, and envelopes, prelabeled with the names of the children in the group. Then the child is given a choice of several gifts, one of which is his to keep. Three gifts, identical to the one he chose, are then placed before him and he is allowed to choose three friends to whom he wishes the gifts to be given. This procedure is repeated until the child has choosen friends for four gifts, making 12 choices. Scoring shows the relationship between the child's choice of other children and their choice of him. The calculations are illustrated. (RC)

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STARKWEATHER SOCIAL RELATIONS TEST

FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN*

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The Starkweather Social Relations Test is designed to measure a young child's social value within his own peer group. It is more than a test of popularity. It combines a picture interview technique with gift-giving, and each child's value in his group is measured in terms of the extent to which his gift-giving is reciprocated by the children whom he chooses. The assumption underlying the choice of gift-giving as a technique for measuring social relations is that an individual wants to benefit someone he likes.

The Instrument

The materials needed for the social relations test include the following:

(1) A composite picture of the children in the group. A picture is needed to help each child remember the other children in his group and to permit him to indicate each choice by pointing to a picture or by naming a child. Individual pictures of the children can be mounted on heavy mat board or, as is necessary with large groups, a composite picture can be constructed from pictures taken of a few children at a time. An example of a composite picture, constructed from polaroid prints, is presented in Figure 1.

(2) Inexpensive toys, such as small plastic cars, marbles, balloons, and pictures. These toys are the gifts which are given to the chosen children. The number of toys needed depends upon the number of children participating in the study. Sixteen gifts are needed for each child -- four each of four different gifts. Gift-giving as the technique for measuring social relations among young children is of particular value because the child makes his choice of other children in terms of specific criteria (the gifts) which he can understand,

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*The Starkweather Social Relations Test was developed as a part of the creativity research supported by the Research Foundation, Oklahoma State University.

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Figure 1. Composite picture of a group of preschool children.

and the actual giving of a gift, as a consequence of the child's naming another child, emphasizes the importance of his choice and thereby increases the probability of the test results being valid.

(3) Envelopes, pre-labelled with the names of the children in the group. In order to insure the privacy of the children's choices of other children, a method of distributing the gifts without identifying the giver is essential. One method that has been most successful has been that of having the child, as he makes his choices, help to place the gifts in pre-labelled envelopes designated as belonging to the children he has chosen. Attractive and interesting envelopes can be easily made from the pages of a wallpaper sample book, preferably a sample book for wallpaper that is clothbacked.

Administration

First, the composite picture of the children in the peer group is shown to the child, and he is encouraged to name all the children, pointing to each one as he does so. "Here is a picture of children you know. Can you find your picture? (Pause) Tell me who the other children are."

The child is then given his choice of several possible gifts, with the understanding that the one he chooses is his to keep. For example, he may choose one of several small plastic toys, such as animals or cars. Three gifts, identical to the one chosen by the child for himself, are then placed on the table before him. "These (cars) are for your friends." The experimenter then touches the toys (cars) one at a time and asks the child to whom he wants each one to be given. As the child makes his choices, he puts each gift in the pre-labelled envelope designated as belonging to the child he has chosen. This procedure of gift-giving is repeated until the child has chosen friends for four different gifts, making a total of 12 choices.

Scoring

The scoring of the social relations test is designed to show the relationship between the child's choice of other children and their choice of him. For example, Child F-1316, as shown in Table I, was chosen by five of the seven children whom she chose. In calculating her social relation (S.R.) score, her relationship to each of the seven children is expressed as a weighted score to show the return that she received on her investment; and then the sum of these weighted scores is divided by seven, i.e., is divided by the total number of children chosen by her. These calculations can be illustrated as follows:

$$\frac{0/2 + 1/1 + 1/1 + 1/3 + 2/1 + 2/3 + 0/1}{7} =$$

$$\frac{0.00 + 1.00 + 1.00 + 0.33 + 2.00 + 0.67 + 0.00}{7} = \frac{5.00}{7} = 0.71$$

In Table I, the scores of three children are presented for the purpose of illustrating the meaning of the social relations score. The first child, F-1316, chose seven of the other children; and in turn, five of them chose her. She chose these children a total of 12 times, but she was chosen by them only nine times and did not receive a complete return on her investment in them. Her score was 0.71. The second child, M-1337, was a child who liked everybody and was very popular. He spread himself in his gift-giving and was frequently chosen by other children. His score of 1.25 shows that he received a large return on his investment in the other children. The third child, M-1318, chose seven of the others, but only two of them chose him. His score of 0.12 shows clearly that he received little return on his investment in the other children.

TABLE I

STARKWEATHER SOCIAL RELATIONS TEST: EXAMPLES OF DATA FOR THE CALCULATION OF S.R. SCORES

	Other Children								S.R. Score
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
F-1316 is chosen	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	
F-1316 chooses	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	0	0.71
M-1337 is chosen	1	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	
M-1337 chooses	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1.25
M-1318 is chosen	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
M-1318 chooses	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	0	0.12

Possible scores on the social relations test range from 0.00 to 4.00. A score of 0.00, which is not uncommon, would be earned by a child who received no return on his investment in other children; i.e., no child to whom he gave a gift would have chosen him in return. A score of 4.00, which is highly improbable, would be earned by a child who received a maximum return on his investment in other children; i.e., he would have given gifts to 12 different children and each would have chosen him four times in return. Thus far, in the testing of several hundred children, the highest score has been 1.89, which was earned by a child who considered everyone his friend and who, in return, was considered a very special friend by almost everyone in his peer group.

Unpublished manuscript
June 1971